

# Second Corinthians

Bible Commentary 2021

by

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## Delivered From Death – 2 Corinthians 1

### 1:1-7

Paul was an apostle by God's will.

Paul was not alone. He included his son in the faith Timothy. I read in First Corinthians chapter 16 how Paul included Timothy in his final instructions and greetings to this church. So this church was familiar with Timothy. Paul was not a lone ranger in ministry. He included other people in what he did. He worked for God and with the church.

Right away Paul described God as the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort. He said God comforts us in our tribulation so we can help others who are in trouble. We are trained through trials to be able to minister to others who experience trials. The Lord does not waste anything in our life. Even the worst problems we experience go toward building us into the people the Lord wants us to be.

What kind of people does God want us to be? He wants us equipped to help others who are in need. He wants us to be able to comfort those who need to be comforted. He is the God of all comfort.

No matter what we go through the Lord Jesus feels compassion. He completely understands the human condition. He lived through it himself. He is touched with the feeling of all our infirmities. Read Hebrews 4:15-16.

### 1:8-11

These verses have impacted and do impact my life. For many years I thought about these verses and today they come back in front of me with a big impact. These verses define for us a principle of God dealing with believers. This principle is wrapped up in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus said unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it abides alone. But if it dies then it will bring forth much fruit. We see this in the life of Jesus. While he walked on the earth he could only reach so many people, but after his death and resurrection the gospel spread all over the world and has touched millions of people.

What does this mean to me personally? It means like Paul in this situation sooner or later God brings me to a place of death. Sooner or later I find myself in a wilderness where bones and rocks and stones cover the ground. I come to a place where there is no help for me from man or the world system. The only hope for me in this place of death is the God who raised Jesus from the dead.

I've experienced this a few times in my life. I can testify from experience that when I come to the end of myself the Lord Jesus raises me up and gives me a new life.

Paul said they were pressed out of measure to the point where they despaired of life. What kind of place is that? What could happen in a person's life that they would despair of life?

Don't listen to someone who preaches that the Christian's life is only about happiness, joy, prosperity, and health all the time.

God uses the wilderness, the suffering, the trials, the overwhelming circumstances to bring us to the end of ourselves. We come to a place where there is no human resource left.

We see this in the life of Abraham. God told Abraham he would have a son, but Abraham and Sarah were as good as dead when it came to children. They were beyond the age when people are physically capable of bearing children. And after God told Abraham this he made him wait another 25 years. It was not until they were about 100 years old that God gave them their promised son Isaac.

God allowed death on us so he can raise us from the dead by his power and then all the glory goes to God Almighty.

Think about Joseph. The Lord spoke to Joseph in a dream and showed him his brothers would bow their knee to him. But what happened to Joseph after he received this word from God? He met a stranger wandering in a field who directed him to his murderous brothers. His brothers threw him in a pit in preparation for killing him but instead sold him into slavery. After slavery Joseph was put in a prison. Until one day! I always tell myself and my wife, "You never know what a day may bring forth." You never know! In one day Joseph went from prisoner in a dungeon to being the prince of Egypt.

God raised him from the dead. God lifted him up out of the pit. He set his feet upon a rock and put a new song in his mouth. Hallelujah. Read Psalm 40:1-3.

Do we understand why the Lord takes us to the place of death? It is for the purpose of delivering us so that many will see and fear and put their trust in the Lord.

The Lord talks to us and he also talks through us. He tells the world that He is the Provider, He is the Protector, and He is the Portion. We do not need to turn to this world system of death. This world has the sentence of death on it.

Turn now to the God who raises us from the dead. This is the God who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead on the third day. This God holds the power of death and life in his hands. He desires to give us life.

Turn to the Lord Jesus with all of your hearts and call on his name. He will deliver us today and he will deliver us again tomorrow. He is the God of all comfort.

## 1:12-14

What did Paul mean when he said "*even as ye also are ours in the day of the Lord Jesus*"? Let's start at the end of this verse and work our way back. We can cross reference this with a similar verse in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20. I think there is a truth here that if we get hold on it would revolutionize our zeal to serve others.

How do we view brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we realize that when we serve others with whatever gift we have that it is an investment? I don't use the word 'investment' like the world system does. I'm talking about an eternal investment.

Can we see this? Paul said these churches were his "joy", his "rejoicing", and his "crown" when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. The "day" here points to a specific time when the Lord Jesus Christ returns to earth. In that day Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. I'm not trying to assign a particular time frame to the judgment seat of Christ. I don't know how long the "day" will last, but at some point the Lord returns, and at some point Christians stand before the judgment seat of Christ. This judgment is about rewards and inheritance.

What are these rewards and inheritance based on? I think we get a glimpse of what those rewards are based on by looking closely at what Paul said here. He barely mentioned this but there is a lot of information packed in these verses. There is a revelation from the Lord we need to see clearly. It will change the way we view church and how we treat people in the body of Christ.

Paul said they acknowledge him "in part" because they admitted he preached the truth but they were not helping him to continue his ministry. When they could get hold on the truth he was proclaiming they would see that their reward on the day of the Lord would be helping Paul as he helped them. Our rewards are tied to helping one another to further the gospel in the world. Our reward is tied to our investment in serving others and building the church. They didn't really understand this yet like Paul did. They were just beginning to see it.

Godly sincerity and simplicity is a life free from self-centered motivations. It is a life that is dead to self, sin, the world, and the devil. It is a life which is committed to the purpose of God. This is a life which no longer invests in self, no longer worships self, no longer provides for self, no longer protects self. It is a life that died in Christ and was raised again to live completely for God. This is a simple life of godly sincerity. It is a life that is not lived according to the wisdom of the world. The world's wisdom is to put self first, to live for self, to provide for self, to protect self, and to worship self. This is the wisdom of the world.

But Paul did not live that way. He lived with godly sincerity and simplicity. He died to self, took up the cross, and lived for Jesus Christ.

## 1:15-20

All of God's promises are wrapped up in his Son the Lord Jesus Christ. Would we know this if Paul was not challenged by his critics? We can feel the criticism toward Paul in his defense of the gospel. Someone accused Paul of saying "yes" then saying "no" in regard to travel plans.

As Paul said this criticism of a servant of the Lord was also a back-handed criticism of the Lord and the Lord's promises. When we attack God's servants we attack him. Paul learned this lesson from the Lord Jesus Christ. When he was on his way to Damascus to persecute more Christians the Lord appeared to Paul and asked a question. "Why are you persecuting me?" the Lord asked. Paul was persecuting Christians, and yet the Lord asked Saul of Tarsus the question, "Why are you persecuting me?"

We should remember this. It will help us avoid criticizing the church if we remember these people are the body of Christ. There is a place for correction, rebuke, and reproof in the church. People need this. But we should be careful we do not criticize in error. Worse yet, gossiping and spreading rumors about people in the church. May the Lord help us stay away from this behavior.

God's promise to us in Christ Jesus is yes and amen. We can trust God's promises. The Lord will fulfill his word and promises. The Lord is trustworthy. Accusing God's servant of being untrustworthy is calling that servant's Lord into question as well. We can trust the Lord. We must choose to believe the best of people and when they sin we cover them with grace.

## 1:21-22

Believers in the Lord Jesus were sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives in the Christian. God the Father established us in Christ Jesus. He anointed us with the Holy Spirit. We were sealed by the Holy Spirit. He lives in our hearts.

Our assurance of salvation is contained in these verses. Ask the question: who is doing the work here? God is doing the work. God established us in Christ. He placed us into his Son and united us with the Lord Jesus in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

God is the one who anointed us. Do we attain some level of being spiritual before God anoints us? No, he anoints the person who believes the gospel of his Son Jesus Christ. When we believe in Jesus then God anoints us. We are sealed.

What does it mean to be sealed? What does earnest mean?

In Paul's day when someone sent a letter it was sealed with hot wax. This method of sealing letters was used even until a hundred years ago. Why was it sealed? So the contents would be made secure until it reached the proper destination.

God sealed us with the Holy Spirit and it is evidence that we will arrive at the destination God has for us. This gives us encouragement and assurance that the Lord will carry us on to completion until the day the Lord Jesus Christ returns. It is his work. God started the work, and God will finish the work in us. (Philippians 1:6).

An earnest is a down payment and is a promise that the full amount will be paid in the future. When we received the Holy Spirit it was a promise that assured us the Lord will complete what he started in our lives. He saved us, he will continue to save us, and one day our salvation will be complete. He justified us, he sanctifies us, and one day he will glorify us. This is God's work from beginning to end.

## **1:23-24**

Paul continued with defending his travel plans while weaving in important doctrine if we pay attention.

Paul did not see himself as a lord or king over the faith of other Christians. Instead, he viewed himself and his ministry as coming alongside others to instruct, teach, exhort, and comfort brothers and sisters in Christ. If an apostle has this attitude then how much more do we need to have this attitude?

I think Paul revealed the attitude of Christ as well. Remember after the resurrection the Lord Jesus appeared walking with disciples on the road to Emmaus? When the night approached he made as if he would continue walking and leave the two disciples. Instead they invited him to a meal. This is a good example of how the Lord works in our lives. He walks with us. The Holy Spirit comes alongside us to instruct and teach us.

Paul said that he did not exert "dominion" over their faith but instead was a helper of their joy. What joy? The same joy Paul had. It is the joy of laying down our life for the gospel and for the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no higher joy than this.

People today in the church exercise dominion over the faith of other people. They build churches on the basis of the world system and the worship of self. Those places are filled with spiritual death.

If you really want to find spiritual life then die to self. Die to self. Deny self, take up the cross, and walk the way of the Lord Jesus.

## **Aroma Of Victory - Second Corinthians 2**

### **2:1-10**

The back story of what Paul was discussing here went back to the first letter to the Corinthians. In that letter Paul corrected them for allowing a man in open sin to continue in the church. He instructed them to discipline this man. The purpose of discipline was to bring the man to repentance and sorrow for his sins.

The church followed Paul's instructions and the man had godly sorrow for his sins. Now, Paul followed up and urged them to bring the man back into fellowship and restore him. This is the goal of church discipline: restoration of the wayward Christian.

It was hard for Paul to write his previous letter. Paul knew it was the right thing to do to command these Corinthians to put this man out of fellowship but it was still a struggle for Paul. Why is it hard to do the right thing? Because the enemy always lies to us and tries to stop us from standing for truth. The enemy will discourage us especially when it comes to standing alone for truth. Now Paul was relieved

that they stood with him for truth and the result was what the Lord wanted. This man repented of his sin and was brought to godly sorrow. Now Paul urged the church to forgive him and affirm the love of God for him.

Forgiveness comes after repentance. We are eager to forgive people who did not repent of their sin. First comes truth, spoken in love, to the wayward person. If the person repents then we forgive. If the person does not repent we still forgive the person but we cannot fellowship with someone who is in rebellion. We cannot agree with someone who lives in open sin. Why? If we fellowship with someone like this then we are in agreement with them. Their sin will become our sin as well. We must come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing. We must be holy, pure, and clean before the Lord. We must confess our sins and walk in humility and repentance. This church did the right thing. They followed Paul's instructions and it worked out according to God's will.

It takes courage and faith to follow God's will in circumstances like this. Human nature prefers to take the easy path of acceptance and friendship of other people even when they are in open rebellion against God. Read Proverbs 27:5-6.

## 2:11

In the context of this chapter Satan's device would be withholding forgiveness. After they disciplined the man who lived in open sin he experienced godly sorrow. This godly sorrow led to repentance and turning away from sin. Now the proper thing to do was forgive the man and reassure him of God's grace.

It appears they did not automatically do this or understand this was what they should do. Paul had to tell them and instruct them to forgive the man. By this we learn one of Satan's devices in attacking the church.

Failing to forgive is a grave error. Jesus taught on failing to forgive others and tied this with God's forgiveness of us. Our failure to forgive will prevent God's forgiveness of our sins.

Jesus taught about forgiveness in Matthew 18. It was because God's desire to forgive men of their sins that Jesus came into the world. Christ came into the world and died upon a cross so we could receive forgiveness from God. This is central to what it means to be a Christian.

We cannot allow ourselves to hold a grudge against anyone. If anyone comes to us and repents we must forgive. I'd like to add that any man who is filled with the Holy Spirit will be ready to forgive. If we are filled with the Holy Spirit we will be willing to forgive people.

If someone never repents we still cannot carry hatred toward them. We need to forgive and pray for that person. Pray they will receive the truth about the Lord Jesus.

The Christian life is marked by forgiveness and humility. Those who carry a grudge do so at their peril. It is a hard to defend ourselves against people. Only God can truly protect us. Our job is to forgive and release people to God.

## 2:12-13

Here we see a glimpse into Paul's method of ministering. He did not minister alone. He worked with other people. This is a good example. We should not be alone in ministry. I know from experience that by going alone we find ourselves in circumstances over our head. We need to work with the church and brothers in Christ.

Paul went to Troas to preach the gospel and a door opened for him. He did not continue for long because he did not find Titus. After saying goodbye to the church in Troas he traveled to Macedonia.

Paul continued to share travel plans with the Corinthians. They criticized him in the past and used his travel plans against him. Paul continued to make himself vulnerable to attack. Why not keep your traveling plans to yourself? Paul was transparent and straight forward with everyone.

It is easy when people attack us to withdraw and no longer share with others. God calls us to continue to put ourselves out there on the front line and make ourselves a target. We cannot stop the enemy from using people to attack us. We can decide to keep serving God no matter what.

## 2:14-17

To smell good food or a pleasant fragrance is to 'savour' that food or fragrance. This applies to taste and smell. What does it mean that God makes manifest the 'savour' of his knowledge by us in every place?

This idea came from conquering Roman armies returning in victory. There was a victory parade and people burned a particular incense to fill the air with the fragrance of victory and celebration.

We are in the triumphant parade of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everywhere we go we exude the aroma of the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. This can be smelled by other Christians and also by unbelievers.

For Christians the smell is sweet and encouraging. For unbelievers the smell is the aroma of death and their own demise. No wonder unbelievers despise the Spirit filled Christian so much. That Christian represents their end. Unbelievers would not put it into these words. Their hatred is the hatred of those who go to their doom.

Who is sufficient to walk in the victory march of the Lord Jesus Christ? We are only sufficient as God makes us sufficient. There are people who pretend to be a part of the victory parade so they can sell their trinkets. They peddle the word of God for money. The enemy attempts to subvert the truth of God even in the face of the victory of the Lord Jesus Christ. Satan is defeated. The Lord Jesus Christ has won the victory through his death, his burial, and his resurrection.

## Glory to glory - 2 Corinthians 3

### 3:1-3

A letter of commendation is like what we think of as job references. At that time traveling preachers would probably collect letters of reference so they could get their foot in the door of churches. For Paul



this was not necessary. These people were his letter of reference. If anyone wanted to know Paul's credentials they could look at the churches he started. These human epistles were not created with a pen and ink but were living letters written by the Holy Spirit.

When I was a young man I thought I wanted to be a writer. I had life controlling problems for which I entered a Christian program. While in the program I was saved by the Lord and my life transformed. There was a crucial point when I almost walked away. The staff who counseled me asked me why I wanted to leave. I told him it was because I was a writer and did not have time to write in the program. Looking back now that was a ridiculous thing to say. But it illustrates where I was at in my thinking. Later after I finished the program and devoted myself to ministry someone asked me if I would take up writing again. It was around that time I came across these verses in Second Corinthians. My reply to that question was that my writing was now these young men.

I still feel that way. The Lord has me writing but I long for the days when my writing could be the Holy Spirit working through me to serve young people struggling with life controlling problems. Lord, direct my path once again to writing your word into the hearts of young Christians again.

### **3:4-6**

We live today in a culture that demeans the Bible and the gospel. It subverts the gospel by replacing it with alternative religions, philosophies, psychology, and psychiatry. People replace the gospel with 12-step programs. They replace the gospel with self-help and self-reliance. Men make a lot of money promoting these alternative systems of thinking and living. Man-centered religion, philosophy, and systems are anti-Bible and hostile to the gospel.

One weapon the world system uses is to make those who use the Bible seem less professional or unqualified to help people who are suffering with life controlling problems. People who struggle with mental or emotional problems feel like they have no alternative but what the world system offers.

I thank God when I was young the Lord sent me to a place where people taught the Bible as the authority in dealing with addiction, mental problems, and emotional issues. I was saved by God's grace and faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. It set me free and changed me from a drug addict and an alcoholic into a Christian. Notice I am stating that a Christian is not a drug addict and he is not an alcoholic. A man who confesses he is a drug addict cannot also confess he is a Christian. People do this, but they are ignorant, deceived, or in rebellion against God's word. Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. If you truly believe this verse in the bible then you cannot claim to be a drug addict and also a Christian at the same time. A Christian is a new creation. Drug addiction is a part of the flesh, the old man, and the carnal man.

I realize a new Christian will continue to be tempted. However, for a man to experience enduring freedom from addiction he must build his life upon the solid foundation of truth and this truth is Jesus Christ. When you are born again you are literally changed into a new man. You need to change your confession to line up with the truth of God. The longer you do this the more you have victory over your old life of addiction. I am a living testimony of this. I know this is the truth from personal experience.

My point is that God's word is sufficient. I am preaching that the gospel is sufficient to help people with every problem they suffer with. Men always try to discount the power of the gospel and God's



word. However, I know from the Bible and from personal experience that what we need is faith in God and in his son Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the answer. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ will deliver us, heal us, and save us. Jesus Christ makes us into a whole man.

Our sufficiency is of God and he has made us able ministers of the New Testament. Every Christian who believes the word of God is an able minister. We have been cheated out of participating in ministry by men who think the only one who is able to minister is the one who went to Bible college.

We have been cheated by a religious system built on the pride of the world system that has cheated the common man from using his gifts in ministering in the church.

We have been cheated by men who put more emphasis on prestige and titles and diplomas. This emphasis on education and titles and prestige comes from the world system. It cheats the common Christian out of the opportunity to minister in the church.

The church today is set up to keep the majority of the people sitting in a pew doing nothing except putting money into an offering plate. This system is wrong. It is unbiblical.

Every man in the church is an able minister of the new testament if he believes the gospel and is born again. Every born again Spirit filled Christian is an able minister and is made sufficient by God to preach the gospel.

My belief is that in order to have revival in America we will need a fundamental change in the way people view church and ministry. This fundamental change will mean we go back to what Paul described in 1 Corinthians 14 where you had multiple men taking turns prophesying God's word and edifying the church in an orderly fashion. We need to follow the example of Christ in serving people in humility. We need to deny self and refuse to make a name for self. Instead, we need to make the name of Jesus Christ great and glorious.

The gospel and God's word is sufficient. The power of God is demonstrated when we preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. God can completely change the lives of people when they hear the gospel and believe it. This is the work God has called us to. We need to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and magnify the gospel of his death, burial, and resurrection.

### **3:7-11**

Paul compared the New Testament gospel to the Old Testament law which was given by God to Moses and Israel. Everything in the law and Old Testament pointed to the Lord Jesus Christ. He fulfilled all of the law given to Israel. Paul said that the law God gave to Israel was glorious. It revealed who God is. The law of God is a description of God.

However, the Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled all of the law and is a better demonstration of God. He is God himself. If you see Jesus then you see God. The gospel and the Lord Jesus Christ are much more glorious than what Moses and Israel had from the Lord.

We travel forward through time and learn more about God in a progressive fashion. He reveals himself to man in a progressive fashion. Some people do not want to grow in grace and in the knowledge of who God is. They stay with the old revelation they had of God.

This can be applied to our personal lives. Paul said he forgot those things which were behind and pressed on to take hold upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Read Philippians 3:13-14. What was behind Paul? The law. Judaism. Moses and the ten commandments. All of that was behind him in his life as a Pharisee. What was in front of him? The Lord Jesus Christ. With everything in him Paul reached forth to take hold on Christ Jesus.

The Lord Jesus Christ showed us the glory of God. The gospel is more glorious than the law given to Moses and Israel. We need to move beyond thinking in terms of the law and comprehend the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **3:12-18**

We should follow Paul's example of speaking with plainness. People try to complicate the gospel and God's message with convoluted systems. Let's stick to the plain word of God and preach the whole counsel of God.

Paul said what God did through Moses was not plain to Israel. They did not understand everything God did through the law and Moses. They did not understand that this pointed toward a greater reality. They did not see the goal which God pursued through the establishment of the nation of Israel, through the law, and through the ordinances he gave Israel. All this pointed them to God's son the Lord Jesus Christ.

We see that the mind of those who continue to look to the Jewish law have their mind blinded. I've said it before but it is so true: religion is one of the most effective weapons Satan has to blind people so they cannot see the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is religion? It is people gathering together around an idol, or a philosophy, or a creed, or an idea and making a confession which they agree on. This is religion. This practice of religion separates people from the living God in Christ Jesus.

The only confession and agreement which men can make which will save their soul is to agree with God regarding his son Jesus Christ. Our confession should be the gospel: Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

When we turn to Christ there is no longer any need to follow the law God gave Moses. This includes the ten commandments. We only have one law now: it is the law of Christ. We are under Christ Jesus himself and not a written code. The law was fulfilled by Christ Jesus. What we could not do the Lord Jesus Christ did for us. God now places us into his son and counts the obedience of the Lord Jesus as our obedience.

When someone turns in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ this veil of religion is removed. Only when we turn to the Lord Jesus Christ can we see reality as it exists. We no longer live by our vain imagination or according to vain religions men create. Instead, we live by the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are free from religion, philosophy, asceticism, and systems of thinking which men create. We have been set free to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. We have spiritual liberty and freedom in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. We are exhorted to never become entangled again by this yoke of bondage to religion, or philosophy, or what men call science. We have been set free to enjoy the Lord and follow him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

As we continue beholding the Lord Jesus we are changed into his image. We are changed from glory to glory by the Spirit of the living God. The Holy Spirit applies the finished work of Christ to our lives. Our sins are forgiven and we are delivered from self, sin, the world, and the devil. We are being prepared for an eternal inheritance in the kingdom of God.

## **Treasure In Earthen Vessels - 2 Corinthians 4**

### **4:1-2**

For me the key here is the phrase "we faint not". Why do we "faint not" in ministry? Because we have this ministry in the same manner we received mercy from God. How did we receive mercy from God? Through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. We persevere because of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not for us. It is for the Lord Jesus Christ. When we love the Lord Jesus we can continue. If we do not really know the Lord Jesus, or if we stop looking at him and trusting in him, then we will become faint. We lose heart when we forget the Lord Jesus Christ.

We must look to Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith. Our sufficiency is from God and not from ourselves. Paul taught us that God brings us to a place of death so we learn not to trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. The Lord raises us up and so we do not lose heart or become faint. Those who wait on the Lord renew their strength.

Our purpose is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. From him flows everything we need for life and godliness. When we abide in him we have everything we need. It is only when we forget him and take our life into our hands that we get into trouble.

Not only do we look to Jesus but we also renounce every goal, purpose, and motive which contradicts the gospel. The gospel gives us the picture of death, burial, and resurrection. This is the Christian life. We do not live for self, therefore our goal is not self-centered. We renounce every scheme of using God's word to promote self. Our goal is to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ.

This is an easy trap for ministries, churches, and servants in God's house. It is easy because men are almost always blind to self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. It takes a revelation from the Holy Spirit to clearly see the curse of the serpent in fallen man. Without the Holy Spirit we automatically resort to living for self. We automatically promote self. We automatically worship self.

The only way we can handle the word of God in a way that is pleasing to God and will impact the conscience of those who hear the gospel is to be completely self-less. We must be dead to self. We must

be completely given to the cause of Christ and not ourselves. A man who is dead to self and living completely for God will inflict heavy casualties in the enemy's camp.

## 4:3-4

There are people who cannot understand the gospel. Why do some people get saved and some people do not? I don't know. We have one reason for this problem here. Paul revealed that the gospel is hidden to those who are lost. Satan blinds the minds of people who do not believe so the light of the gospel cannot penetrate their blindness.

The world mentioned is a system of living in independence from God. This world system includes government, business, and society. The spiritual aspect of the world system is described by John as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). Satan is the god of this world. We know this because of the account of the temptation of the Lord Jesus in the wilderness. When Satan tempted the Lord Jesus he offered him the kingdoms of the world. From this we know Satan indeed is the "god" of this present world system. He is behind every king, queen, president, and world ruler.

Paul opens this up for us in Ephesians 6. Ephesians 6:12, *"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."* The apostle John confirms that the whole world system currently in place is of the devil in 1 John 5:19, *"And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness."* The apostle James warns us that if anyone loves the world he is an enemy to God. James 4:4, *"Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."* To be a friend of the world system is to be a friend of Satan. This world system is in agreement with the devil.

Satan and the system he runs on this earth blinds men to truth and the gospel. How does he do it? He manipulated men into a system which forces men to provide for self, protect self, and ultimately to worship self. The world system forces men to put themselves first. It teaches men to love themselves first. It teaches men how to take care of their material needs independent from any thought of God. It suppresses the spiritual and exalts the material. The world system is designed to teach men to exalt their own selves with pride and position. It teaches men to make a name for self and subject others underneath of one's name in order to acquire provision, protection, and power. The world system completely corrupts those who love it and who live for it. Those who live for money and success in the world system are the enemies of God Almighty. Read James 5:1-3.

This is how men are blinded to the gospel. The devil keeps them preoccupied with self. They spend their lives pouring out their energy, life, and resources upon self. The thought of God does not enter their mind.

The enemy succeeds by teaching men to live just like he does: independent, self-reliant, and exalting one's own name. He succeeds by seducing men into worshiping self.

Jesus lived the opposite of this. He came into this world to lay down his life and serve others. He showed us how God wants us to live. We are not to live self-centered but instead Christ-centered. Our goal is the Lord Jesus. The goal of the Lord Jesus was to live completely for the heavenly Father. This is the example we follow. Philippians chapter 2 outlines this.

Today is the day of salvation. Repent of self, sin, the world, and the devil. Turn your heart completely to the Lord Jesus Christ and believe the gospel. Jesus died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

## **4:5-6**

People preach themselves. They preach their experiences, they talk about their life, and they share their feelings or opinions. Paul said he did not preach about himself. He did share about his life in passing as it was necessary to defend and proclaim the gospel. But the focus was never on Paul. We don't really know a lot about the life of Paul. Most of what we know of Paul someone else wrote about him in the book of Acts.

Instead Paul preached Christ Jesus the Lord. He did not say he preached but "we" preached. He is not thinking of himself but what he and his co-workers did. They did not preach about themselves but instead they preached Christ Jesus the Lord.

Paul and his co-workers presented themselves as servants to those they preached to. Paul was their servant for the sake of the Lord Jesus. Those who believe the gospel are the church and it is this church Paul said is the body of Christ.

Paul is a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and so he is a servant of the church. The church is the body of Jesus Christ. It would help us when we relate to other believers to remember this. This person who believes the gospel is part of the body of Christ. Remember the Lord Jesus when he first confronted Saul of Tarsus completely identified himself as those Christians whom Paul persecuted.

We are reminded of how God first spoke light into existence. This goes back to the beginning of Genesis. From Genesis to Revelation God is the same God. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This same God who created all things gave us his son Jesus Christ. It is through a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ that we come into contact with God and know him. It is only through the son of God that we can know him. Everything else is only shadows of Christ Jesus the Lord.

We can see the glory of God when we look on the Lord Jesus. When we think about how Jesus humbled himself, how he died on the cross for us, how he was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day. Then we see God clearly. God is three in one. He is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a full revelation of who God is. It is in the face of Jesus Christ that we see God.

## **4:7-12**

The power of God for salvation is the gospel. This message is the treasure we carry in these earthen vessels. Paul was making reference to the book of Genesis. Earthen vessels point back to how God made Adam out the dust of the ground. The human body is made of dirt. These vessels walk around with the power of God within them, but this power of God can only be transferred to another vessel by breaking the first vessel. The treasure can only be shared if the vessel is broken.

This is why Paul went into this next part about "troubled yet not distressed, perplexed but not in despair, persecuted but not forsaken, cast down but not destroyed". What does that mean? It means the earthen vessels which carry the gospel must be broken in order to transfer the power of God to another earthen vessel.

We can see this at Calvary. God could not forgive us until Christ died on the cross for us. Jesus gave his life and died so we could have life. Jesus taught about this when he said a grain of wheat abides alone until it dies and then it can bring forth new life. In the same way we can only transfer this saving power from ourselves to someone else by dying first.

If we sincerely want to bring God's word to other people then the Lord will make sure we get broken so this can be accomplished. Have you asked God to use you? Have you asked God to make you into a minister of his gospel? Get ready to get broke. The gospel can only go through a broken vessel. It cannot go any other way.

Jesus prayed in the Garden, "Father if there is any other way!" But there is no other way. Life can only be given when the giver dies.

When we die God raises us up to new life. We are raised with resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Death works in us so we can give life to other people. This is the way of Calvary. This is the way of the cross. This is the way of God. We die so others may live.

## **4:13-18**

These "light" afflictions work for us. What do these light afflictions work? An eternal weight of glory. We cannot compare our suffering with the glory which we will receive. This provides motivation to never give up. Our afflictions are light in comparison to what lies ahead. This light affliction only lasts for a moment. This eternal weight of glory! How long is eternal? Forever. This trial lasts only a moment. The glory ahead of us is eternal. We cannot compare the two. We keep our attention on what is invisible instead of the visible trials. How can we focus on what is invisible? By faith and we must decide to live by faith every single day.

We do not faint on this journey of loss. Our outward man perishes but our inward man is renewed day by day. Our spirit grows stronger as we get closer to our eternal inheritance. The outward man dies but the inward man lives forever. This is what we focus on. We invest ourselves in what lasts forever.

Paul told them his suffering was for their benefit. It was through these difficulties he brought the gospel to them. This gospel is brought on the lips of those who pay a price. We die daily so others may benefit from the gospel.

The same God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will raise us up. We will be resurrected along with all the saints who went before us. Paul looked forward to the resurrection and standing with this church. I wonder if it entered his mind that not only this church but the church for 2,000 years following would stand there with him?



We are thankful to be saved and thankful for the opportunity to lay down our lives so others can hear the gospel. We are thankful God uses us to help others get to know him better. We will stand before the Lord one day and our thanksgiving will resound to the glory of God. All glory, honor, and praise to the Lamb of God. Hallelujah, for the Lord God Almighty reigns.

## A New Creation - 2 Corinthians 5

### 5:1-8

The earthly house of this tabernacle mentioned in these verses is the body. We have a body created from dust so Paul calls it an earthly house. Tabernacle is another word for tent or temporary dwelling place. If this body dies we have another body from God which is a body not made with hands and is eternal. Perhaps Paul used the word "if" here because not everyone will die but some will be alive when the rapture happens. God prepared for us a resurrection body similar to the body which the Lord Jesus had after he was raised from the dead.

In this we groan? I think this describes the turmoil a Christian endures in this fallen world, but also could reflect how men feel in general feel with the difficulties of life. We are all on a journey of loss. As we grow older, get sick, and deteriorate we groan inwardly. The Christian longs for his new, resurrected body. In this new body we will never be naked but clothed completely in the life and the righteousness of Christ Jesus. We will never be ashamed, embarrassed, or humiliated again in these bodies.

This is God's plan and he gave us his Holy Spirit as a guarantee of what will come for us. As long as we are in the earthly body we cannot fully enjoy the presence of God. When we depart this body and receive our new body we will enjoy the presence of God forever. The assurance of God's promise makes us look forward to the future when his promise will be fulfilled. While we live in this body we walk by faith in God's promise. We walk by faith and not by sight. We should repeat this to ourselves as often as we can. This is a walk of faith. We do not walk by sight. We walk by faith.

Absent from the earthly body we are immediately in God's presence. Our spirit will return to God who gave it. Those who put their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ look forward to an eternity in God's presence.

### 5:9-12

Paul taught that Christians will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. This is a judgment for believers. This judgment is not about heaven or hell. The believer is secure in what the Lord Jesus did for us. If we believed the gospel we are saved. The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we put our faith in the Lord Jesus we are secure in him. This judgment is a review of what the believer did while in the body. This is a life review to determine inheritance and reward in God's kingdom.

When Paul thinks about this he immediately follows up with "*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men*". We need to understand that Christians should be taught to fear God and live in such



a way to receive their reward and inheritance at the judgment seat of Christ. Some people may have a hard time believing this but it is right here in the Bible. Revelation 3:11, "*Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, **that no man take thy crown.***"

The crown is reward and inheritance. Jesus was exhorting the believer to be diligent in protecting their inheritance. It is possible to lose rewards because of relationships with unbelievers or other Christians who lead us to things we should not be a part of.

I remember when the gravity of these verses dawned on me. I felt so helpless. I prayed as often as I could that God would help me to live each day in view of the judgment seat of Christ. I prayed and asked the Lord to guide my life so that when I stood before him I would not lose my reward or inheritance. Pray this kind of prayer and the Lord will hear you. This is praying according to God's will. People always want to pray about the temporary things in life but we need to pray about what is eternal and what will have impact on us in eternity.

## 5:13-16

Previously Paul mentioned how "the terror of the Lord" motivated him to preach the gospel. Here we see that the love of Christ is a motivation for him in the ministry as well.

The one who died for all is the Lord Jesus Christ. He died on the cross for our sins. We were dead in our sins and trespasses. He died for all! Not just a select group, but he died for all! Anyone and everyone who believes the gospel is saved. All who call upon the name of the Lord Jesus are saved.

After salvation we no longer live for self. We are no longer self-worshipers. We no longer live according to self-interest, self-provision, self-protection, self-promotion, self-worship. Now we live to put the interests of Christ first. We look to God for provision and protection. We promote the gospel of Jesus Christ. We worship the Lord God and him only.

We live for him who died for us and rose again. We live to Christ, for Christ, and in Christ. It is no longer "I" who lives but Christ who lives in me. The crucifixion was the death blow to the self-life. When Jesus was crucified the religion of Self Exaltation which Satan inspired was destroyed. Jesus destroyed the work of the devil. Jesus broke the power of sin. He delivered us from the world system and from the enemy. We were translated out of darkness and into the Kingdom of God's Son.

We no longer know our brothers and sisters according to the flesh. The flesh represents relating to people according to the principle of self-interest. You scratch my back and I scratch your back. This is no longer how we live. Now we live in the Spirit and give our life away. We die to self so others can receive the life of the Holy Spirit. We spread the gospel when we die and Christ lives through us. The gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Remember, God put us in Christ. We are united with him in death, burial, and resurrection.

We no longer know Christ according to the flesh. We do not follow him around like the crowds so they could get healing or a free piece of bread. Our relationship with Christ is no longer just what we can get from him. Our relationship with him is to be one with him in goal and purpose. We are one with him. This is living according to the Spirit and the gospel. We are united together with him and are one with him. Those who see this truth walk in the authority of God's Kingdom and eat of the hidden manna.

They are overcomers. Why are they overcomers? Because they died with him and were buried with him, and rose from the dead with him.

## 5:17

Soon after I became a Christian I was given this scripture verse to memorize. My teacher asked me how this verse applied to my life. I was instructed to apply this to my life and set goals. I read this verse and the Lord showed me how this verse applied to me. I understood that I was no longer the person I was a few weeks before. I was in deep sin and headed for an early grave or jail. But the Lord graciously pulled me out and sent me to a Christian program where I was dramatically saved and set free from many life controlling problems. As I read this verse I realized I was a new creation. The word creature in the King James Version means "creation". I was a new man. The old man was gone.

My old life was passed away and all things became new. I knew this for a fact because my life changed so dramatically that the old man stood in stark contrast to this new creation I became. I put my faith in the Lord Jesus and was filled with the Holy Spirit. There was an intense zeal in my heart to read, study, memorize, and meditate on the Bible. I searched for ways to apply scriptures to my life. This verse was one that always stuck with me because it is basic to the entire Christian life.

When we believe that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead and we confess with our mouth we are instantly changed. We may not feel it, we may not see it right away, but it literally happens. For me I was fortunate that the change was dramatic and it was not hard for me to see, but for other people the change may not be as evident immediately. However, a Christian is a new creation. A Christian is a new man. It does not matter how we feel nor what opinion people may have on the matter. When we share with people we are a Christian they will look for change in our life but sometimes change comes gradually.

However, salvation is real the moment we believe the gospel. The old man is gone. He died on the cross with the Lord Jesus. We are a new man. We are a new creation. Old things passed away.

Why is this important? The reason it is important is because our future life is determined by what we believe today. What I believe in my heart today determines where I will be tomorrow. If I believe I am a grateful recovering addict then I will be in another AA meeting holding hands with people who do not believe in Jesus Christ. When I confess what they confess I end up like them. Some of those people may also confess to be Christians but they do not understand what the Bible says about who they are if they continue to agree with unbelievers.

An unbeliever says he is a recovering addict. A Christian is not a recovering addict. A Christian is a new man. The old man is gone. This does not mean the Christian will not suffer from temptations to drugs, or alcohol, or any other sin. Christians are tempted to sin. But that temptation and even sometimes failure does not change who he is. He is no longer that old man. He is a new creation. He is born again. The Holy Spirit now lives inside of him and his body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. He can never go back into one of those meetings and confess something that is not true. If he does that, if he goes back, he will suffer. He will continue to suffer with temptations and never find victory which the Lord Jesus alone can give him.

I can tell you today I no longer suffer from the temptations I had when I was saved. That was in 1989. I do not even remember what it feels like to get high any more. I don't remember what crack smells like. I don't remember what smoking cigarettes tastes like anymore. Those things were left behind me so, so long ago. How was I able to leave it all behind me?

Because I decided to believe this bible verse. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says I am a new creature. Old things have passed away. All things are new. I no longer confess anything except what the Bible says about me. The Bible says I am a child of God. I believed in my heart Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He died on the cross for my sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. I confess this with my mouth. I have told many people I believe this. I know I belong to my heavenly Father. When Jesus Christ returns I will go up in the rapture to meet him in the air and I will be with him forever. Only a man who is born again can say that.

## 5:18-21

Here we take another look at the principle of receiving and giving. We have received forgiveness of our sins. God has reconciled us to himself through his son the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now what is our duty? We become ambassadors of this reconciliation. Once we receive the benefit of knowing Christ our duty is to share the good news with others. Why not? Why would someone want to keep this to himself? If a man does not want to share the gospel with others I find it doubtful he really believed the gospel himself.

God committed to us this message of reconciliation. It is not optional. God is not asking us if we want to share the gospel with others. Instead, he commits this responsibility to us. We are ambassadors for Christ. God speaks to the world through our witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. We plead with people in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God through his Son.

God has made his only Son Jesus to be sin for us. Jesus did not know any sin. He was the perfect, sinless sacrifice for us. He who knew no sin became sin for us. Why? So that we would be made the righteousness of God in Christ. When we believe in Christ we are united with him and become one with him. What Christ did in his earthly life and ministry we now do. We share the gospel with people and we deny ourselves. We deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus. As Christ is so are we. We die so others may receive eternal life. We are part of his body. In this way we fill up the sufferings of Christ in our flesh so that others may benefit from Christ as well.

There is nothing mystical about this. It is practical. You do not have to flagellate your back for God. All you have to do is humbly serve others and share the gospel as you have opportunity. Just by doing this you will suffer in the world system. But we take all this suffering in stride. The servant is not greater than his master. The Lord Jesus also suffered for the sake of his heavenly Father. We follow in his footsteps.

## Unequal Agreement - 2 Corinthians 6

### 6:1-2

I have heard these verses preached in evangelism to unbelievers. This is used to urge people to make a decision for Christ. However, Paul was not writing to unbelievers. He was writing to Christians in Corinth. What is the purpose of telling believers that today is the "time accepted".

It may seem I am throwing doubt on the security of salvation. I am convinced the man who believes the gospel is secure in salvation. However, the man must believe the gospel.

Our work is to believe in God's son. Each day is the day of salvation. Our salvation is secure when we believe the gospel. I must believe the gospel. Today! It is not enough that I believed the gospel at some point in the past. I must believe the gospel today. Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation. Salvation is not for yesterday or tomorrow. It is for today.

Today is the eternal now. I have no other time than the time I am experiencing at this present moment. Right now I must believe the gospel or be lost. I cannot trust that I believed the gospel yesterday or years ago. I must trust in the Lord Jesus Christ now at this moment. We cannot rely on the past or the future. We can only rely on the Lord Jesus Christ right now in this present moment. Now is the day of salvation, now is the accepted time, now is when I believe the gospel.

Do you believe the gospel right now, at this very moment? If you believe the gospel then you are saved and eternally secure.

### 6:3-10

Here is an impressive list of credentials for ministers of God. Those who serve God and the church should qualify on this obstacle course! I'm looking close and I don't see a bible college education, theology degrees, or diplomas here. All I see is a man's personal experience with God. I see a man on the backside of the desert and dying to self, sin, the world, and the devil.

What should a church look for when they interview a new pastor? Has the man suffered for believing the gospel? Has his life been in danger? Has he been persecuted for this faith? Does he live a pure life, does he have experiential knowledge of God, is he patient, is he kind, is full of the Holy Ghost? Does this man walk in God's love with God's truth in his mouth? Is he ready with a word in season for those who need it? Is he unknown or does he have a big name? Does he live for others or does he live for himself?

If we take this list serious it would change the way we look for ministers of God. It would change the way we consider ourselves and our service to God.

### 6:11-13

Paul gave everything in ministering to the Corinthians. He gave his heart to the service of this church. His mouth was open and his heart was enlarged. He preached the gospel and held nothing back. His heart was filled with love for them. He was committed to their best interests.

Now, he wanted them to see his example. In the same way he gave his life for them, he now wants them to learn to give their lives. Instead of being self-centered he wants them to grow up in Christ and learn how to die to self and live for God. In the same way he lived he wants them to also live for God.

As Paul's heart was filled with love for them he asked them to also allow their heart to fill with love as well. "Be ye also enlarged" means to have a heart filled with God's love.

A recompense in the same means they should follow the example Paul lived in front of them. Lay down your life for the Lord Jesus. Give everything for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **6:14-18**

This is a good portion of scripture to meditate on because it will save the Christian much grief and suffering if he understands this.

Paul used words like "yoked", "fellowship", "communion", "concord", and "agreement". What is he talking about?

This is a picture of a believer trying to have a relationship with someone who does not believe in Christ. A Christian who tries to fellowship, commune, and make agreements with someone who is not a believer is heading straight for big time trouble.

Think about this in simple terms. A believer is on his way to heaven. The unbeliever is on his way to hell. A believer is supposed to live a Christ-centered life. An unbeliever lives a self-centered life. How can the Christian be happy or have joy in a situation like this?

It is impossible. All the Christian can expect from this relationship is suffering and discipline. The Christian will reap the wind and his life will not bear the fruit which God wanted him to bear.

It is like someone who purposely plants weeds in his vegetable garden instead of pulling the weeds out of his garden. It doesn't make sense does it?

But when we spend our life in fellowship, communion, and agreement with unbelievers then we are doing the same thing. We are purposely planting weeds in the garden of our life. We will not be able to bear anything useful for the kingdom of God. If we are able to accomplish anything for God it will be through unending opposition. We will never have peace until we give up trying to serve God and retreat into a world of make-believe and fantasy.

If we want God's power then we need to come out from among them and be separate and clean. We are commanded in scripture to seek fellowship only with those who call on the name of the Lord with a pure heart. We are commanded to not have fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. Read Ephesians 5:11.

## Godly Sorrow - 2 Corinthians 7

### 7:1

What does it mean to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit? Usually when we think about sin or filthiness we think in terms of the flesh. But what is filthiness of the spirit?

There is spiritual filthiness. Anything outside the gospel of Jesus Christ is spiritual filthiness. Every religion, philosophy, or system of self-enhancement is filthiness of the spirit. False gods, idols, philosophies, ideas, or religions. All these defile a person spiritually. It is one thing to be defiled by fleshly indulgence but what happens when a person is filthy in flesh and spirit?

Paul exhorted the Corinthians to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. We must stay away from sins of the body and sins of the mind. The soul has an appetite for sin just like the body does. We must be clean from everything that contaminates the body, soul, and spirit.

Many times one leads to the other. If a person indulges in the sins of the flesh it will lead to filthiness in spiritual matters as well. If a person is filthy in the spirit it will lead to filthiness in the flesh. One leads to the other because a human being is not just a body and he is not just a spirit. God made man body, soul, and spirit.

The unbeliever has a dead spirit. He is unable to fellowship with God through the spirit. He cannot commune with God, he cannot fellowship with God. However, unbelievers are taught by demons how to commune with them through their dead spirit. We must flee all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. The Lord Jesus saves us completely. God is able to save to the uttermost those who come to him through Jesus Christ. He saves us body, soul, and spirit. Read 1 Thessalonians 5:23.

### 7:2-4

Paul took comfort in difficulties because he knew his ministry to the Corinthians was God's will. He knew his work was done by the power of the Spirit. He knew he gave them the gospel which is the power of God for salvation. He could be joyful in tribulation because he knew what he suffered was worth the eternal investment in their lives.

He was defending himself and his team of coworkers who served this church. He said they wronged no man, corrupted no man, and defrauded no man. He did not defend himself to make them feel condemned. He reassured them that he loved them. It was only the minority, it seemed, who remained doubtful and critical of Paul. Paul could not leave those critics unchallenged.

What does it mean to die and live with people? It means he was committed to their best interests. He did everything for their benefit. His ministry was for their good, and not just their temporary good in this life, but for their eternal good.

Paul could be bold toward them because he knew his conscience was clear and his words and actions toward them was to help them. It was all for them so they could know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul comforted himself with the knowledge that his ministry was from God and through the power of God's spirit. He could be comforted with a clean conscience. He could be comforted in knowing he went the extra mile to help them.

Does our ministry comfort us in our trials? Can we say we know that even though we face insurmountable challenges that our hearts are at rest? We know we are in God's perfect will for our lives.

It is enough to know God is with us. He comforts us in all our trials so we can comfort others in their trials as well.

## 7:5-7

When Paul and his coworkers received news about the Corinthians from Titus they rejoiced. This joy came during hardship they faced in Macedonia. Paul described their hardship as "*without were fightings, within were fears*". This is a good description of most of the Christian experience while we walk in this fallen world.

There will always be attacks from the outside. We have Satan, fallen angels, and demonic powers arrayed against us. We have people who are puppets of the devil and demons who come against us. This evil is not always obvious. It could be as simple as someone who consistently irritates others or who consistently causes disruptions in the lives of other people.

As well as dealing with these problems from the outside we must deal with our own battles. There is a spiritual struggle which takes place in the mind and spirit. Our mind is attacked by the lies of the enemy in a multitude of ways. Even though we confess we are dead to sin, self, the world, and the devil this does not stop the enemy from harassing us. Indeed, it probably increases the activity of the dark powers in their harassment of our minds. I won't give examples but the alert Christian will know it when he experiences it. There is a supernatural fear that can come on us at times. I am reminded of how often Paul encouraged Timothy not to be afraid. He said God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power, love, and of a sound mind. So can fear be from an evil spirit? Absolutely. The enemy attacks by using fear, anxiety, and a multitude of other ways.

We overcome fear the same way we receive forgiveness of sins. We overcome by faith in the truth of the gospel. We take our stand on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ. We proclaim what God's word says. God placed us in his Son and united us with the Lord Jesus in crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

Read Job 13:15. Once we resolve the problem of death then fear can no longer keep us in bondage. Fear of death is the foundation of all other fears. When we are ready to die, then we have the strength to really live.

It does not mean we won't feel emotions but it does not have power over us. We can continue to live, and function, and continue the work God gave us. Sin no longer has dominion over me!



See in these verses how vital it is we live and work together with other believers. Paul could not make it on his own. He needed Titus, and Titus needed his fellow workers. Each person in the church needs all the other people. We are fitted together by God like this. We are made to help one another and depend on one another.

## 7:8-10

What does Paul mean that he made them sorry but he did not repent though he did repent? This takes some slow meditation and consideration to pick out the thought. Paul wrote them a letter which made them sorry. The word "sorry" here would be like "grieved, sorrowful, sad, upset". He made them upset by his letter. He did not repent that he wrote them the letter. But he did repent in some respect. I think Paul is writing on two different levels at the same time. He is saying something in principle, but he is saying something also from a personal perspective. He is not sorry he wrote them the truth. It was the right thing to do. But many times when we do the right thing it will cause us to feel sadness because doing the right thing sometimes hurts people. It hurts peoples' feelings to be corrected or rebuked. Paul was sad that he had to hurt their feelings, but he was not sorry that he did the right thing in writing this letter. The letter was anointed by the Holy Spirit, yet Paul knew it would hurt them emotionally and he was sad they would be hurt.

He knew the letter would hurt them but only for a little while. It is similar to how when we get a cut and we have to apply alcohol or an antiseptic to the wound. It is the right thing to disinfect a wound, but it will hurt, even if just for a little while. It is a good pain which is meant to heal the problem of infection. In the same way Paul had to hurt them with the truth but only so they would be healed from the infection of sin in their church.

Now Paul had heard the result of his letter and he was glad. He was not glad they were hurt temporarily, but he was glad the result of his correction was their spiritual health. He rejoiced because their sadness or sorrow inspired them and brought them to repentance. They agreed with Paul and with the Lord that they were wrong and changed their mind to agree with the truth. Paul said this sorrow is a "godly" sorrow because it makes a person whole. It brings spiritual health to sorrow over sins and to turn away from self-worship toward God and truth. Since they did repent in a godly way they did not receive any permanent damage from Paul's application of the rod of truth to seat of their knowledge. They got over it and it was for their good which was the goal.

Now Paul explained something which opens spiritual understanding. If we grasp this it will give us discernment and help in dealing with people. Paul said their sorrow was a "godly" sorrow which worked in them repentance to salvation. However, there is another sorrow people experience when they are corrected. This is the sorrow "of the world" which produces death.

The natural reaction that an unbeliever has when confronted with truth is to justify self. An unbeliever will resort to anger and self-pity. Self-pity is a doorway to self-worship. When a person will not listen to truth or humble themselves they resort to defending self. They talk only of their feelings or emotions. There is no grasp on facts or truth. All this person has is the darkness of their self-defined reality. They worship self and will not bow their neck in the presence of truth. They feel sorrow but this is not a sorrow that brings them closer to God. This sorrow drives them further away from God and the truth. They do not want to hear the apostle speak. They want the prophet to shut his mouth. They will

not listen to men who teach God's word. Instead they surround themselves with people who tell them what they want to hear. This is the broad highway to spiritual death and destruction.

Godly sorrow will not defend self. It will bow down in the presence of truth and humble itself and confess, "I am wrong, Lord. You are right, Lord. I am wrong."

The best example I can think of in the Bible is the account of Peter and Judas. Peter betrayed the Lord Jesus and the Bible said he went out and wept. Peter's sorrow at his betrayal was godly sorrow which led to repentance and salvation. Judas was sorry for what he did. He confessed he betrayed innocent blood. But what did Judas do? Instead of finding forgiveness Judas hung himself. He committed suicide. Worldly sorrow works death.

When a man defends himself in the face of persistent sin then he will inevitably display worldly sorrow which produces his death.

It is incredibly important that we humble ourselves always. Even if we think the person God used to correct us was wrong we should not defend ourselves. We should go to God in prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to show us the truth. Don't fight, argue, or defend yourself. Go to the Lord and ask the Lord to reveal the truth.

## 7:11

When the Christian sorrows "after a godly sort" he will have the same behavior as Paul listed here. There will be diligence, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal, and revenge. All these words, in context, were directed toward dealing with the problem of sin in an individual's life. When we deal with sin after this manner Paul says we are "clear in this matter".

Paul paints a picture for us with these words. It is a picture of Peter weeping after he betrayed Christ. It is a picture of David crying out to God that he would not take away his Holy Spirit from him. This is Solomon lamenting that the whole duty of man is to fear God and keep his commandments. This is Jeremiah weeping in the book of Lamentations. This is Daniel confessing his sins and the sins of his people Israel. This is Nehemiah grabbing the remnant in Jerusalem and pulling out their hair. This is Isaiah proclaiming woes upon himself because of his unclean lips. This is John falling down at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:9 says if we confess our sins then God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Why do men refuse to confess? Why do men spend their energy defending their self and their ridiculous sins?

It is because men do not believe in God. They only believe in their own self. This is the tragedy of the fall of man.

When we turn away from unbelief and self-worship and put our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ then our eyes are opened, our ears can hear, and our heart can find joy in becoming clear with God in every matter of our lives.

## 7:12-16

Notice after all the tumult of this church and the sins this church had to deal with Paul stated explicitly that he now had confidence in them in all things. How is this possible?

It is possible because Saul of Tarsus was confronted with the living God on the road to Damascus. He was confronted with the risen Lord Jesus Christ. After this he was no longer Saul of Tarsus but became the apostle Paul. Paul knew that the Lord Jesus Christ can change a man completely.

Paul learned he could trust the Holy Spirit living in these Christians. This is an important lesson we must learn as we relate to brothers and sisters in Christ. Someone can go from being a drug addict on the street one day to being a saved, cleansed, and purified saint the next day. I know this for a fact because it happened to me.

Paul was confident in them because he knew who the Lord Jesus Christ was.

Never judge people according to their past sins. When we come to the Lord Jesus Christ he wipes out our past life of sin. We are no longer what we once were. We are no longer that man any more. Remember 2 Corinthians 5:17, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

These Christians in Corinth were no longer what they once were. Paul could be confident in them because they were saints. This is the church Paul spoke to now. This was the body of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul learned these men and women were the body of Jesus. How did he learn this? He heard the Lord Jesus ask him, "Saul, why are you persecuting me?" Saul was persecuting Christians! But the Lord says, "Why are you persecuting me?"

Paul knew better than anyone that the people in the church were members of one body and that body is Christ. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Can you trust the Holy Spirit? Can you believe the Spirit of God in your brothers and sisters? We must believe the best of them. This is the attitude of love. Love always believes the best of people.

Believe in the Holy Spirit in your brothers and sisters in Christ. Say with Paul, "I am confident in you."

## Financial Stewardship - 2 Corinthians 8

### 8:1-6

Why did Paul mention the churches of Macedonia? Why did he mention those churches were in a great trial of affliction and deep poverty? He said that despite their affliction and poverty they gave with joy to help support brothers and sisters in Christ. These churches did not consider their problems but were focused on the needs of others. Why did Paul use this example in his letter to the Corinthians?

The underlying issue with the Corinthians was self-worship. They focused on self. They followed the names of men, and compared themselves with themselves. They were Christians but their method of life was like the world system. In order to shake them out of this Paul pointed out how other churches gave during a time of affliction and poverty. This example was not to condemn the Corinthians but to shake them out of focusing on self and think about the needs of other people.

I found out when I was a young Christian that the quickest route to overcoming my problems was to help someone else. I grew quickly in the Lord when I forgot myself and focused on serving. This was what Paul taught.

There was a need Paul tried to fill with the churches who would benefit from these material resources. There were people in need. They needed the support they could get from the Corinthians.

Paul described this process of giving and receiving as a "grace". He said that since other churches were setting an example he sent Titus to the Corinthians to complete this same "grace" in them. The "grace" here was the process of organizing the church in a way to make sure they had an opportunity to give to the needs of others. We have people like that today. There are ministries like "Samaritan Purse" which organize the church to give to the needs of others.

## 8:7-8

The Corinthians were blessed with spiritual gifts. They were blessed with faith, utterance, knowledge, and diligence, and in love toward Paul and his coworkers. Now Paul asked them to abound in the grace of giving. Paul qualified this by saying he was not commanding them, but was pointing out the example other churches set by giving. He asked them to prove the sincerity of their love.

It is easy to lift our hands, sing praises, speak in tongues, preach the word. It is easy to say we love people. But Paul said to put faith into action in a tangible way. This was putting faith into practice. It was one thing to be a Christian on Sunday morning, sing hymns, and bow our head, or lift our hands. It is another thing to be ready to help people during the week. Are we alert to the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ?

Ask yourself this question. Do you know of anyone that has asked for help? Did you turn them away? Did you delegate their need to someone else? Did you get involved or did you walk away? These are hard questions to ask ourselves.

In my opinion, this is also a test for Christians who have plenty of material resources. Sooner or later the Lord will bring people to their door as a test to see how they will react. Sooner or later that prosperous brother in Christ will get an unexpected call from another brother in Christ who is in need.

What will you do? Will you listen? Will you get involved? Or will you tell them to go talk to someone else? Will you say by your actions "God bless you and go away".

This is a serious question. We will stand before the judgment of Christ. What will the Lord Jesus say about us on that day? Well done or go away?

## 8:9

Jesus was rich? In what way? Materially? Do you mean Jesus had a lot of money, but he gave away his money so that his followers would become rich? How does that work?

It grieves me to confront this topic on the false gospel of prosperity. This gospel has leavened and infiltrated and taken control of most of the outward church in America.

I say outward in contrast to the "inward" church, because there is a real, inward spiritual remnant in America as well. They are not deceived by the charlatans on "Christian" TV who rake in millions of dollars to promote their false gospel of self-improvement.

These false preachers focus on the "here and now" but Jesus and the apostles never did. The gospel of Jesus Christ and his apostles always focused on what is eternal and not on what is here and now.

The gospel looks forward to the kingdom of God. It does not focus on self-improvement through having a positive attitude, positive confession, or through repeating positive affirmations.

I call these practices "Christian witchcraft" because it emphasizes spiritual law to the exclusion of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Those who teach spiritual law are teaching a self-centered message for people who are covetous and ignorant.

People deceive themselves by saying if God will give them a million dollars they will do a lot of good with it. Yet the Bible teaches the exact opposite. Read 1 Timothy 6:9.

2 Corinthians 8:9 is not talking about material finances. This verse points to the incredible truth that Jesus Christ left heaven (the true riches), and came to earth. When he left heaven and came to earth he left his riches and became poor. And why did he come to earth? So that we could go to heaven! He became poor so we could become rich.

Paul used this example in the context of talking about material resources, so I can understand how people misconstrue Paul's illustration. But I cannot believe Jesus was materially rich on the earth. He preached against money on more than one occasion. He preached against being covetous. He preached on this topic over and over. He said a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions. There is no way Jesus could have preached this kind of message if he was materially rich.

Let's say, for a moment, Jesus was materially rich and gave it all away so we could be rich. Let's just consider this might be the correct interpretation.

So if Jesus gave it all away then why are we hoarding big bank accounts then? If Jesus gave it all away then we need to do the same thing, right? But those who preach this false gospel do not empty their bank accounts and feed the world. Instead, they buy themselves big cars, and big houses, and fancy clothes. They take money from the people of God and enrich themselves. They are covetous, proud, and blasphemers. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. They are false prophets. People need to open their eyes and separate themselves completely from these false gospels and false teachers.

If Jesus was rich and then gave it all away when he started his ministry then he was living in disobedience until he was thirty years old? It just doesn't make sense to believe that Jesus was materially rich on earth. He was rich in heaven. He came to earth and was poor so he could fit in with the poor who would actually listen to the gospel! Read James 2:5.

## 8:10-15

The church in Corinth talked about sending financial help to their sister churches for a year and nothing was done. This sounds like people were all talk and no action. Paul now brought their talk into account and persuaded them by pointing at the generosity of other churches.

Read 2 Corinthians 8:11. Get to work. Don't be a talker. Put your faith into action. I was taught as a young Christian how to take God's word, relate it to my life, and set goals to obey God's word. God's word is not just to fill your head with spiritual knowledge. It is instruction for right living. We need to consciously, actively, and aggressively look for ways we can apply God's word to life situations. Here is one verse that can help us. (2 Corinthians 8:11)

One key idea was this part "that which ye have". The Lord does not expect us to do anything but what we have in our hand. We need to consecrate our lives, our money, our possessions, our relationships, everything in our life: give it to God. He gave it all to us in the first place. Everything we have comes from God, and we should be ready to give to others what God gave to us. We will never out give God.

The idea of "equality" is underlined in modern America. However, unbelievers will never be able to implement a system of "equality". It is impossible because unbelievers are by nature self-worshippers. Unbelievers will always live for self first. They will always think and act in accordance with self-provision, self-protection, and self-worship. This is why when governments try to impose a system of "equality" like communism or socialism it will always fail.

The only place men can come close to equality is within the confines of a Spirit-filled church. When people are sensitive to the Holy Spirit then they will be alert to the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ. Those who have material resources will give to help brothers and sisters who are in need. This is only possible in a church filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

## 8:16-24

Paul discussed practical arrangements he made with coworkers to secure the financial offering from the Corinthian church and transport it to churches who needed it.

Notice the phrase "providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men". This is a principle of good stewardship. Always have open books when it comes to finances. Anyone should be able to see where the money goes, who handles the money, and how the money is managed. Always be transparent about finances. Not only be transparent about finances but also transparent about plans for the church, changes to be made, and the vision the leadership has for the future of a church. Nothing should be done in secret. Everyone should be well-informed of everything happening in a church.

I think it would be a good idea when there is a deacon's meeting that notes be taken during the meeting and then read to the congregation. This is another way people can be transparent and provide for things honest in the sight of God and men.

Perhaps it would help people in the church to know exactly what their leaders discuss and the plans they make. This would help people know whether or not they want to stay in that church or go somewhere else. Nothing should be hidden. Leaders should be completely held accountable for all their words and decisions.

## **Giving and Receiving - 2 Corinthians 9**

### **9:1-5**

Paul made sure the church in Corinth was able to get their financial contribution together. He was concerned that the offering be handled correctly. He sent an advance team to get it ready. By the time Paul arrived everything would be ready.

One idea I lift from these verses is the need for organization. When a lot of people work on a project it is a good idea to be organized. What is the overall project? The goal was to help Christians who were suffering through a famine in Jerusalem. Also Paul was getting Gentile churches to donate towards helping Jewish Christian brothers in Jerusalem. The church is not Gentile only. People believe today the church is only Gentiles. The church is Jew and Gentile together under one roof. The Lord Jesus made everyone one people in him when he died on the cross. It was the Jews who handed him over, but it was the Romans who nailed him to the cross. God's people are three in one: Israel, the church, and the kingdom.

We should be ready to do good works. The church should be alert to anyone who has need and look for opportunities to help people especially those in the house of faith. Read Galatians 6:10.

### **9:2**

Here is another verse which 'prosperity' preachers enjoy abusing and taking out of context. If you hear someone always quoting this verse it is probably because all they know how to teach is spiritual law. Those who teach spiritual law usually neglect the most important thing we can ever teach anyone: the gospel of Jesus Christ. People are easily distracted from the gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, they invest themselves in spiritual law. The real motive behind teaching spiritual law is self-worship, self-provision, and self-protection. People employ spiritual law for their own self-interest and self-improvement. This is what I call "Christian" witchcraft.

A Christian is not a follower of self. If anyone teaches you how to improve your life then they are teaching a man-centered and self-centered message.

The gospel is not self-improvement. The gospel is about dying to self. The heart of the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For those who truly believe the gospel God takes them and places them into Christ Jesus in death, burial, and resurrection. This means we die to self, to sin, the world, and the devil.



We are dead to self, which includes self-provision, self-protection, self-promotion. Those who have died with Christ and are raised together with him no longer live for self.

Instead, they live for Jesus and the gospel. They died and no longer live. Christ lives in them and through them to accomplish his goal. We see his goal clearly at Calvary.

In the context of this chapter Paul talked about the church in Corinth giving resources to help churches in Jerusalem who were suffering. Paul did not teach them if they gave 10 dollars they would get 100 dollars back from God. Paul did not teach that God was a cosmic slot machine.

Let's put this as simply as possible. Paul appealed to every point of argument he can come up with in order to get these Corinthians to do the right thing. He gave an illustration of someone who planted seed to reap a harvest. The picture was simple. The more seed we plant, the more crops we harvest. Paul said when we step out of self-interest and help others that God then will take care of us. Matthew 6:33. Seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. All these other things will be added to you.

He was not teaching them a get-rich scheme. He did not teach a ponzi scheme which is what most of prosperity preachers turn this into. Sowing and reaping means there is a cause and effect relationship in life. If we are generous then God will see that we also are taken care of. When we die to self and live for Christ then we can rest assured the Lord will provide for us, he will protect us, and he will reward us with more of himself. Because he is what we really need. We don't need a million dollars. What we need is more of Jesus.

## 9:7

This was another of those bible verses I learned early as a Christian. It was on a list of scripture memory verses given to me. As instructed I memorized this verse, related it to my life, and set goals to apply it. My goal at the time was to pay my tithes with a good attitude.

What does it mean that God loves a cheerful giver? I think it means that if you have a bad attitude when it comes to supporting the church or ministries then you should keep your money. A good example is the account of Ananias and Sapphira. They did not have a good attitude when it came to giving. Their motive was to give but keep back part of their gift for themselves. Their public actions were hypocritical. It did not line up with the motive of their heart. God saw what was in their heart and what they hid and he exposed them before the church. They died as a result of hypocrisy and lying to the Holy Spirit.

Recently I've thought about the part of this verse "...or of necessity...". What does it mean for someone to give of necessity?

I think one interpretation is that a person is being forced to give. They don't have a choice in the matter. They are condemned by church leaders and if they do not give they are brow beaten or threatened.

Another way to look at this is a person is deceived into thinking if they give 10 God will return to them 100. In other words, a person is deceived by the prosperity gospel. They are currently poor financially

but they think if they just give \$10 then God has to give them back \$100. This is also, I think, giving out of necessity.

The bottom line is our motive should not be motivated by covetousness or by personal need. If we are in need then we should keep what we have. I know people would disagree with this by pointing to the poor widow and Elijah but I don't think what happened with Elijah and the widow is an example or precedent for giving in the church. I think what Elijah did was a one-time deal with that widow and was not some kind of bible principle for giving. People get really screwed up by taking scriptures out of context like that.

A cheerful giver is someone who has enough that he can give to others. We should not give because we ourselves are in need and want to get a return on our investment. That is worldly thinking. We should always give expecting nothing in return. That should be our attitude. It is an attitude of giving with the motive of love. However, we also know the Lord will take care of us, no matter what. We should never let the devil stop us from giving because of the lie that we will run out or won't have enough for ourselves. God will take care of us. We should be willing to give to people who are in need if we have it.

Remember Peter and John said they did not have silver or gold but what they did have they gave. What did they give? They gave the gospel of Jesus Christ. They gave that crippled man Jesus!

We can always share the gospel with people. This is the best gift anyone can ever receive.

God loves a cheerful giver. Let us not be brought into bondage to rules which men create from church tradition about tithing. I think it is sad when people give out of grudging obligation. Ironically I think if churches did not create rules about giving 10 percent then people might actually give a lot more sacrificially in support of churches. People should be inspired by love in their giving. Give with joy. Give as unto the Lord.

## 9:8-11

What grace was Paul referring to? "*Make all grace abound toward you*". I think Paul meant that he prayed they would be equipped for the ministry God called them to. God is able to make it so they will have everything they need to invest their life in the gospel.

Paul used the illustration of a farmer sowing seed, reaping a harvest, and then having more seed he could sow as a result of the harvest. Behind the sowing and reaping was God. He gave us seed and enables us to reap a harvest. Instead of focusing on spiritual laws of sowing and reaping we should instead turn our attention to God who gives everything and allows us to become more like him. He is the ultimate giver.

The process of giving and the ability to continue is from God. This should cause thanksgiving to the Lord. Helping others should not make us covetous or focused on what we can get in return, but instead it should cause our hearts to be lifted up in worship and thanksgiving toward the Lord who allowed us to participate in giving.

## 9:12-15

Paul outlined benefits the Corinthians received as a result of giving to the saints.

In a practical way their giving took care of real needs of brothers and sisters in Christ. Their gift would buy bread and food and supply material needs for the saints.

Another benefit was that it would cause people to give thanks to God for providing their needs. The Lord Jesus taught his disciples to pray each day for their daily bread. God is our provider. When God answers our prayers and supplies our need we give thanks to God.

Also, it glorifies God when Christians put faith into practical action. By giving and helping others the Corinthians demonstrated their faith was real. It is a living faith that leads to practical action on the behalf of others.

Finally, when the saints received material help from the Corinthians it would inspire them to keep the Corinthian church in their prayers. As we pray for one another our hearts are tied together and the church grows as it should grow. When a Christian brother helps another Christian brother it can only further the cause of Christ and strengthen the bond of love between us.

We should never forget that the ultimate gift is from God himself. What is the ultimate gift from God? What is this indescribable gift? It is when God the Father gave his Son to be our atonement at Calvary. Christ died for our sins on the cross, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. This is the indescribable gift of salvation and eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus.

## Every Thought - 2 Corinthians 10

### 10:1-2

Walking according to the flesh is exercising world system authority. There is a difference between spiritual authority and world system authority. Jesus taught his disciples worldly authority exerts dominion over people. Worldly authority creates a name for itself then builds power, position, and prestige in its own name by multiplying numbers underneath the name. Create a name and subject people underneath the name. This is how the world system works.

This is not how God's kingdom works. God's kingdom is like what Paul showed us here. He used the word "beseech" to the Corinthians. He tried to aggressively persuade them to do what was right instead of forcing them to do what was right. Paul's authority as an apostle was the same authority Jesus showed in his earthly ministry. There was a demonstration of God's power to heal, cast out devils, and preach the gospel. However, this authority was not used like the world uses authority to subject people underneath it like a worldly self-worshipping king. People in the world exert authority over others to build their name and power.

Paul said that the Corinthian troublemakers assumed he walked in the flesh like them. He did not walk in the flesh, or in the principle of the flesh, which is self-worship.

Paul turned around and said that he did walk in the flesh but Paul had a habit of using the same word to mean something completely different to create a sharp contrast. When in verse 3 he said he walked in the flesh he meant that he was still in a human body. He walked in the flesh in the sense that he was a human being in the flesh. It is important to follow closely when Paul makes these flip flops in the way he uses a particular word. It can be confusing if we are not tracking closely.

Notice in many of Paul's letters he did not command people so much as "beseech" people. He appealed to the conscience in those he wrote to. He wanted to persuade people to do the right thing, not because he said so, but because their conscience confirmed he spoke the truth. We should always appeal to the conscience because the truth is real whether or not people believe it. There are facts which exist outside ourselves which do not change. There are absolute truths which do not change no matter what men may think or suggest.

It is these facts we present and the Holy Spirit will use these facts to persuade men of the truth. The most important facts we can ever present to anyone is the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes.

### **10:3-6**

The Christian's fight is not with people but with the powers of darkness which influences and controls the lives of people. People are influenced and controlled through propaganda and repetition of lies. At the heart of this war is the written word, the spoken word, and the living Word of God.

Paul said that though we live in natural bodies and walk on two legs like everyone the Christian does not engage in war the same way the world does. The nations go to war in order to gain power, prestige, and control. The Christian does not engage in spiritual warfare in order to gain power and control over other people. Instead, the Christian tries to influence others through his life, his actions, his attitudes, his prayers, and through his words. He hopes people will by their own decision submit themselves to God by faith in the the finished work of Jesus Christ.

There are several layers to this problem. The first is that people must understand that without God they are lost sinners. They are headed to eternity in a lake of fire. These facts are hard to convince men of because man in his natural state is full of pride and self-righteousness. He does not think he is all that bad. In fact, he thinks he is a good man, a good leader, or good employee. He thinks he is a good husband, or a good father. The majority of the time the word of God is completely lost on these kind of people. Those who think they are good will not listen to the gospel.

The gospel is for people who are convinced by the Spirit of God that they are sinners. They are evil. The heart is deceitful and wicked above all things. The philosophy and psychology of the world, however, teaches the exact opposite of this. The world teaches people to love their self. The world teaches people that their problems spring from a lack of love for their own self. They have a poor self-image. They don't love themselves enough. These are complete lies and deceptions to trap people into becoming hardened self-worshippers.

Self-worship is the heart of idolatry. When men bowed to idols in the ancient world it was because they believed that by doing so they would gain provision or protection. In modern culture men bow down to

self. Men are proud of their self-reliance and independence. However, this is idolatry. Men are lovers of their own selves, as the apostle prophesied would happen more and more the closer we get to the end of the age.

What are the weapons of Christian warfare? Paul exhorted his son in the faith Timothy to "endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ". What do Christian soldiers use as weapons?

Begin with the Lord Jesus and the account of his temptations in the wilderness. What weapon did the Lord Jesus use to defeat the attack of Satan?

Jesus quoted the Bible. One of the greatest resources in defeating the power of the enemy is the Bible. I would like to add that a Christian does not need to know the logic of how unbelievers think. We do not have to fight this battle on the enemy's turf with intellectual arguments on science, evolution, and so forth. Instead, we engage the enemy on the ground of the gospel. Our part is to proclaim the gospel. When the Bible talks of defending the gospel I take this to mean that we continue to proclaim the truth no matter what lies the enemy promotes. We do not engage the world on its terms. Instead, we engage the world on the terms of truth.

My part is to proclaim the Lord Jesus. I don't have to intellectually wrestle someone to the ground. Most of what we call apologetics, in my opinion, is more for people who are already believers rather than an effective tool in evangelism. It is more of a way of defending those who already believe the gospel against the infection of the devil's lies.

True evangelism is speaking God's word in a simple and potent manner. By preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ we will do more harm to the realm of Satan than anything else. All the debating with people accomplishes little compared to a humble man proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When Paul talked about pulling down strongholds he described attitudes of unbelief which build up in the minds of people. We do not have to understand those strongholds. We simply tear them down by a continuous assault with the truth. I don't have to understand how salt is a preservative. I just put the salt on the meat and the meat is preserved. I don't have to understand how antibiotics heal me of sickness. I just take the pill. In a similar fashion, the proclamation of truth and the gospel repeatedly will tear down lies and strongholds in our own minds and also in the minds of those we serve.

You can try to argue with an atheist if you want to. But I am here to tell you that the darkness of unbelief is a deep pit. You can never get to the bottom of it. No matter what you say to an atheist they will always find reasons not to believe the truth of the gospel.

Our part is to preach and proclaim. Our part is to speak it, live it, share it. Let us not get weary in this work, either. I think a lot of people give up before they get started because they know they are not smart enough to argue with all of the falsely called science people embrace today. Here's the thing. We don't have to argue. Just give people the word of God. They can take it or leave it, that's not my responsibility. My part is to be faithful with what God gave me to do.

These verses in the Bible are important for Christians. It is important to understand that we cannot trust our imagination or mind. Our thoughts must be disciplined to submit to the truth of God's word. The flesh in us will continue to rise up in unbelief against the Bible. This is why every day we bring the

flesh under subjection by blasting ourselves with truth through reading, studying, memorizing, and meditating on God's word.

You might think that after twenty years of being a Christian that faith gets easier. It does not. If a man does not feed faith with God's word then he can revert back to idolatry and unbelief. It is like the law of gravity. The only way you can over ride the law of gravity is to stay inside the airplane. Step outside the airplane and you will drop.

May the Lord help us to be steadfast in this spiritual battle. It is a battle fought in the mind and in the thoughts. It is important what we think, what we listen to, what we put before our eyes, and it is crucial the people we hang out with and make agreements with.

## 10:7-11

Paul was criticized because of his physical appearance and also by a lack of polish in speaking. From this we can discern how carnal the critics were. Their pattern of judging someone in ministry was by how they looked and how well they spoke? People still do this today and it is a tragedy.

We have the example of David and Saul in the Old Testament to counter this worldly method of criticism. The Lord told Samuel when he anointed David that men will look on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart. Would you rather be judged by your appearance or judged by what is in your heart? Men look at you from the outward but God looks at the heart.

The Corinthians should have known Paul's heart because Paul founded the church in Corinth. He built the church from the ground up by preaching the gospel. Paul gave his life. He never asked for financial support. Instead, he lived off donations from other churches. Paul worked making tents. Yet some of the Corinthians found reason to criticize Paul.

Where does this critical attitude come from? It is a weapon people use to tear down one man so they can take his place or take control of a situation. It is an attack to push out one so he can be replaced.

Paul was forced to defend himself for the sake of the church and the gospel. As we continue to read this letter it is striking how unwilling Paul was to defend himself but he did it in order to uphold the gospel and protect this church from wolves.

No doubt the religious leaders criticized Jesus in a similar manner. They could not put a dent in his message so they criticized where he came from or that he broke their traditions.

The gospel is disruptive because it takes control out of the hands of men and puts it back into the hands of God. When men are in control there will be division, strife, and controversy. The gospel will be ignored or diminished or replaced with self-help.

Let's think about Paul's statement that his authority was for edification. Let's compare this to 1 Corinthians 14:3.

The purpose of speaking in the church is to edify, exhort, and comfort. We are to build, encourage, and comfort people in the church. This is the authority which we were given. Our authority in the church is



not to tear people down or destroy peoples' lives. I've personally known people in ministry who did use their authority to destroy lives while at the same time saying they cared for people. They said their ministry cared for people. I shake my head in sadness at the deceitfulness of those who claim to work for God. Not all of them. Just those who make a name for themselves and promote themselves.

Our authority from the Lord is to preach the gospel to inspire and convince people that Jesus Christ is Lord. He died on the cross for our sins, he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Our lives and our message is to help people see this and be united with the Lord Jesus Christ.

## 10:12-16

The wolves who infiltrated the Corinthian church boasted in Paul's line of things which Paul already made ready to hand. In other words, Paul founded the church in Corinth and these wolves were coming in trying to take over. Paul would have none of it. He confronted the impostors head on, and exposed their habit of measuring themselves against Paul and against one another.

When men compare themselves they have lost already. There is always someone we can point out and say we are better than. This is how worldly people exalt themselves. They exalt themselves by stepping on the backs of other people. They do this by tearing people down and making themselves look good.

In reality, there is only one measuring stick for the Christian and that is Christ himself. None of us can compare to our Lord and Savior, and so it is best we be quiet. When we compare ourselves to someone else it is because we are no longer looking at Jesus. Instead, we are looking at men. Those who look at other men are in reality self-worshippers. Followers after the names of men, and those who want to make a name of their own self are self-worshippers. A true Christian is not a self-worshiper but we worship the Lord God.

In these verses Paul expressed his hope that their faith would grow so they would be able to support his missionary work in regions beyond them. A growing faith, from the biblical sense, is seeing things according to how they really are, in truth, and in reality, rather than having our own vain imagination and visualizing how we want things to be. Everyone has distorted opinions, but a man growing in faith is laying aside his own thoughts and taking on more of the mind and heart of the Lord Jesus.

Faith sees reality, it perceives God's Kingdom, and takes hold on what Christ accomplished. Faith is when a man sees what is eternal and unshakable and lives in view of what he sees there. This is true, biblical faith.

When we see things in reality we will want to help anyone attempting to further the gospel. This was Paul's hope that they would see God's kingdom by faith and would help him to further the cause of Christ.

## 10:17-18

Jesus noticed that religious leaders put themselves in the place of honor. They took the honor to themselves. Nobody gave it to them. They took it. They did this by religious acts in public and by sitting in places deemed to be for those in high esteem. God did not give these religious men these honors. They commended themselves.



Paul warned against this attitude. Those who live according to the principle of the world system seek to elevate self. They do this through titles, education, and climbing through man-made hierarchical systems.

Especially in the church it does not matter if a man commends himself, or if other people commend a man. The only servant in God's house who is of any value is the man whom God commends.

How do you find a man whom God commends? Who were the men in the Bible that God commended? Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, who else? What did all of these men have in common?

They had faith in God. They knew that they were sinners in need of a Savior. They all believed in God's promise which he made to Adam and Eve in the Garden about the Seed of the Woman who would some day crush the head of the serpent.

Don't seek the commendations of men. Seek commendation from God. Seek to be a man of God instead of a man of the world.

Many claim to know God but who does the Lord know? Does he know your name? Is your name written down in the Lamb's book of life?

Admit you are a sinner. Believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins, that he was buried, and he rose again the third day. Call upon the name of the Lord Jesus.

## **Another Jesus - 2 Corinthians 11**

### **11:1-2**

The example I think of in the Old Testament was when Abraham made his servant swear to fetch a wife for his son Isaac. The servant swore to Abraham and traveled back to Abraham and Sarah's original homeland to find a wife for Isaac. This was an example of the Holy Spirit. Here Paul was used by the Holy Spirit to bring the church in Corinth to the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is the bridegroom and the church is the bride. Paul said he wanted to present the church as a chaste virgin to Christ.

In the Old Testament when believers turned away from God to idols it was compared to sexual immorality. An unfaithful believer was compared to a harlot. This was an individual or group of believers who turned away from faith in God to idolatry. A chaste virgin was a group of believers who firmly held the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. They were not turned aside by wolves in sheep's clothing who promoted a false gospel of self-worship.

The true gospel always points to God as our provider, protector, and portion. A false gospel will teach men to use spiritual law to provide for self, protect self, and also to elevate our name. A false gospel will inflate the self, but the true gospel teaches men to deny self. The true gospel teaches that Jesus Christ is our provider, our protector, and he is our portion. We worship the Lord Jesus Christ. We lose our lives for the sake of Christ and the gospel.

Godly jealousy is in contrast to carnal jealousy. When someone has carnal jealousy they are selfish and want to control someone else. A person who has godly jealousy is interested in their beloved's best interests and in promoting their welfare. They have no desire to control the other person. They only want that person to do what is right so that God will be glorified and they will reach the judgment seat of Christ and receive their reward.

Paul called his speech here "folly" because he used human arguments like his critics. Base human arguments were all they could comprehend. We can tell it grieved Paul to use arguments and logic. He would much rather preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **11:3-4**

Paul referred back to the account of the serpent and Eve in the garden of Eden. This account is in Genesis chapter 3. The account of Eve and the serpent is the foundation of understanding the condition of man and the world today. In Genesis 3 we see why mankind is like it is today. Man became one with the serpent when he took the side of the serpent against God's word. He believed the lie when he already had the truth. This is what men do today. They take the side of the lie instead of taking the side of truth.

Subtlety means cunning and craftiness. The enemy was cunning and crafty. He questioned God's word. The entire movement today within the church when you hear people talk about "having a conversation" is about questioning the truth of God's word. Men want to marginalize the word of God. They are taking the side of the serpent.

False teachers, false prophets, and false apostles present another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel. A good cross reference to this passage is the book of Galatians where Paul confronted this head on especially in Galatians 1:6-9.

I would be remiss if I don't pause here and mention some of the greatest false gospels and false spirits in America. These are the Catholic church, the Mormon church, and the Jehovah Witness church. All of these are the biggest cults in America that I am aware of. The danger with these cults is that they freely use the name of Jesus Christ. However, they all teach another Jesus, another spirit, and another gospel.

Another cult in America is the prosperity gospel movement. This is harder to pin down because it is more of a grass roots movement instead of a brick and mortar church. From my own experience I saw this get started in charismatic churches, move to the Pentecostal and Assemblies of God, and now pretty much has taken over everything except the most fundamental churches like traditional Southern Baptist churches or Calvary Chapel. Churches who stress systematic bible teaching seem to have the greatest resistance to these perversions of the gospel.

### **11:5-12**

It is important that a minister not only preach the gospel but also live a life that makes it difficult for people to attack the gospel. Here Paul outlined a personal defense because when he was attacked the gospel was attacked. Paul's defense of himself was for the purpose of lending proper credibility to the gospel which he preached. He was not interested in defending himself because he was concerned about other people's judgment of himself. His defense was actually a defense of his message.

Our personal credibility is tied in with the gospel we preach. If our lives are inconsistent then we make it more difficult for people to believe the message. Our goal is to bring people to the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everything goes toward this goal. Our entire lives are involved in this goal.

We can read between the lines of Paul's defense and list some of the accusations which people leveled at him. He was not a polished public speaker, according to these critics. Paul preached the gospel freely and did not charge people money to hear him speak. In the minds of some this meant Paul was not worth listening to. It seems Paul was particularly disturbed by this last criticism and went into detail giving his motives for preaching the gospel to them free of charge. He did this so he could not be put in the same category as those who preached the word of God for money.

This should cause us to closely examine our motives in serving. Is our motive to make a living? Is this our ultimate goal? If the ministry quit paying us would we be tempted to quit? What is our goal? What is our motive?

Only the Lord can truly show us what is our motive in serving him. My prayer is that I may have a pure heart and a sincere motive in serving God. I do not want to build my life or other people's lives on the sand of self-provision, self-protection, or self-worship.

## **11:13-15**

Paul was sincere in his comments on the critics at Corinth. He said they were not only critics but were false apostles and deceitful workers. This brought the situation to a whole new level. Not only was Paul being attacked but the church in Corinth was also under attack.

Paul said these men were deceitful workers and false apostles. They transformed themselves into apostles of Christ. If this was true then how much more true is it today?

A deceitful worker is someone who pretends to have the gospel as their main interest, but instead they change the gospel into something which is self-serving or which causes men to be covetous and greedy for gain.

Idolatry always boils down to self provision and self protection. When the purpose of the message becomes self provision and self protection then you know you are dealing with idolatry and man-centered ministry.

Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. He pretends he is on the good side and pretends to be a benefactor of mankind. He will always tempt men in a way to make men think he has their best interest at heart. He appeals to the pride in men. He appeals to the lust of the eyes and the lust of the flesh and the pride of life. These are the three areas he tempted Eve in the Garden, and it was also the three areas in which he attacked the Lord Jesus in the wilderness.

Paul defended the gospel against people who were not only critics but agents of the devil. We must realize that people who oppose the gospel are not just fallen men but are empowered and energized by the spirit of the devil. Indeed, all people who do not know the Lord Jesus or believe the gospel are instruments of Satan. Read Ephesians 2:2.

The bible makes it plain that every person who is not a Holy Spirit filled Christian is filled with the spirit of the devil. That is hard to wrap our head around but it is written in Ephesians 2:2. This is not the only place the Bible makes it clear that mankind is divided into two separate groups. Men are devil worshipers or they are God worshipers. There is no in-between. Man does not live to himself. He is a servant. He is either serving Satan by serving himself, or he is a servant of God.

These pretenders in the Corinthian church transformed into ministers of righteousness. However, Paul said God would judge them according to their works. God will judge because he sees the true motive in the hearts of men.

Keep in mind that part of Satan's deception is to transform himself into an angel of light and into a minister of righteousness. The closer to righteousness Satan can imitate the more deadly is the deception.

## **11:16-33**

Paul presented his credentials which proved his apostleship and his sincerity as a minister of the gospel. What were his credentials? If he were alive today and listed these credentials on a resume he would not get his foot in the door of any church. My point is that our values and what we hold as proof of a man's calling and ministry have departed from the Bible's list of credentials. A man with a piece of paper, what Paul called "commendation", is all one needs today. All we need is a piece of paper from an educational institution saying we completed their courses and are therefore qualified to serve in ministry. My question is this: who gave that educational institution their authority to issue that piece of paper?

This is how the world system deceives people. They deceive people with pieces of paper, with their credentials, which they claim gives them authority.

There is, however, no authority except what God gives men.

Paul was called to an apostle by the Lord Jesus Christ. He lists here the credentials of his ministry. Let us outline these credentials: religious background, good family and a pedigree, stripes, prison, death threats, beatings, stoning, shipwreck, threats from Jews and Gentiles in the city and in the country, threats from fake brethren, hunger, thirst, and exposure. I don't think my list does justice to what Paul described. What would we think if someone applied to be our pastor with those things on his resume?

Our ideas of ministry are far, far away from what these men of God experienced.

## **Visions and Revelations - 2 Corinthians 12**

### **12:1-6**

Without going into detail we learn a lot from Paul's description of his spiritual experience. Consider the context and why Paul brought this subject up in the first place. Paul was confronted by what he

described as false apostles and deceitful workers. Paul's defense was to state his credentials, not because he wanted to defend himself, but because he wanted to defend the gospel. He tried to protect the Corinthian church from the influence of impostors who crept in and attacked him.

Paul described a spiritual experience to further illustrate his authority to speak on spiritual matters. Even in the way Paul described this he was struggling and reverted to speaking in the third person. He acted like he might be talking about some unknown, anonymous man but was describing his own spiritual experience. The conflict in Paul's heart is evident by how he structures this description. He described visions and revelations as if it happened to someone else.

Paul gave us a few items to think about from the spiritual realm. From Paul's description we learn there are at least three heavens. Paul said he was caught up to the third heaven. I've heard speculation on what the first and second heaven are but I don't think anyone truly knows.

Paul made it clear what he heard was not lawful to talk about. It was not lawful to describe what he heard in that place. This is interesting because we do hear about people who say they went to heaven or hell and came back to describe their spiritual experience. Paul's description of his spiritual experience casts on people who go into graphic detail about their spiritual experiences. I'm not saying it is not possible for people to have these experiences. I'm inclined to believe that some people have had genuine spiritual experiences with the Lord and were sent back to give a testimony. However, it is always interesting to compare Paul's lack of detail here with what you hear from people today about their experiences. Why? Why was Paul so reluctant to talk about the spiritual world that he saw and heard? He said it was not lawful. What does that mean? Does it mean it simply is not possible to accurately describe the other side? Or does it mean that God did not permit Paul to repeat what he heard and saw?

Paul did not want to boast in himself when it came to spiritual visions. Instead, he would rather people come to their own conclusion about him. He didn't want people to think more highly of him than they should. After all, Paul knew he was just a messenger of Christ. It was not the messenger who was important but the message he carried. What was really important was the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I've learned reading this passage to be careful about sharing spiritual experiences. It is much better, instead, to focus on the message God gave us. It is much better to proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ rather than our experiences with him. Just as Paul said elsewhere that we are to preach Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves only as servants of the gospel.

## 12:7-10

There is a danger when receiving revelations because a man can become proud of his spiritual knowledge. In 1 Corinthians 8:1 Paul wrote "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth". It is dangerous when a man receives visions from the Lord.

The Lord will allow challenges to keep a man humble, especially when the man is a chosen vessel to preach the gospel like Paul. Paul needed to receive revelations, not for himself, but for the church to be edified and built up. When we receive understanding, insight, and revelation from the Lord it is not for

ourselves only. What we receive from the Lord is for the purpose of building up the church. Why does the tree bear fruit? It is not for itself but so others may benefit.

The problem is that a man thinks he is better than others if he has an experience with the Lord. If he receives revelation and understanding he might think he is special or better than his brothers. This was why Paul taught on the body of Christ so each member will not think highly of himself. We belong to one another. No man in the church exists by himself. We are called to minister to one another and build one another up in the faith.

Anyone can be afflicted by pride. Pride will separate us from one another. Pride will isolate us. Pride, in its culmination, will make a man insane, just like the devil.

The Lord wanted to protect Paul. So he allowed a terrible affliction in Paul's life. Paul described this problem as a messenger of Satan sent to buffet him. People try to explain Paul's thorn in the flesh as a physical affliction, and perhaps that is true. However, Paul specifically described this problem as a messenger of Satan. There was a real spiritual attack on Paul's life. It was an attack he could never get away from. The Lord allowed this so Paul would always feel weak and feel a need for God's grace.

The Lord told Paul his grace was sufficient. The Lord's grace is sufficient for us, too, only we are many times too proud to even feel our need of it.

May the Lord deliver us from pride. May he do what is necessary to keep us humble and always aware of our constant need for his mercy and grace.

## **12:11-13**

The signs of an apostle listed are patience, signs, wonders, and mighty deeds. When Paul gave this list he was defending the gospel and not just his ministry. In this context if Paul's ministry were to be discredited then the gospel of grace would be discredited. Paul could not allow wolves to destroy the work of the gospel. He was forced into a position of defending his calling, ministry, and ultimately the gospel.

Paul said his ministry was not inferior to the chief apostles even though he considered himself as nothing. It is difficult to track Paul because he says one thing and then turns around and sounds like he is contradicting himself. It is not a contradiction. He is speaking on different levels of meaning at one time. He said he considered himself as nothing. He was not interested in building his reputation. At the same time he could not allow his ministry to be discredited because this would endanger the gospel.

The Lord provided miracles through the apostles. We see this in the book of Acts. You may hear preachers today say that those miracles the apostles did have passed away since we have the complete written Bible. They said since we have the Bible there is no need of miracles.

If we apply that logic to the early church we could say they did not need miracles either because they had the completed canon of Torah. The logic does not hold up.

Signs, miracles, and wonders still happen. Of course, since we live in an age of deception and delusion much of what we see that appears supernatural is part of Satan's plan to sidetrack the church. I've seen

this personally in my own life. I've seen people flocking after men who claim supernatural powers, but who preach something that does not line up with the Bible.

Be careful with the supernatural. Satan can deceive people with the supernatural. There will be more supernatural deception taking place the closer we get to the end.

Having said that I do not believe signs, wonders, and miracles no longer happen. I do not believe we need to throw out the supernatural power of God because we have a completed Bible.

I also underline the importance of interpreting everything through the lens and framework of scripture. When a man experiences the supernatural he should seek God through the written Bible to put that experience to the test. We are commanded in the Bible to test the spirits to see if they are from God.

An apostle, according to Paul's argument, will have a ministry associated with the supernatural.

I do not think it is wise to claim to be an apostle or a prophet in public before the church. Instead, if that is a man's gift walk in it but be reluctant to talk about the supernatural. Paul was forced to do so in this context. He was forced to talk about these things because the gospel was at stake. We should never attempt to promote ourselves, our name, or attempt to build a ministry by telling stories of supernatural experiences. To build our name or ministry on the foundation of the sensational is a recipe for pride and destruction.

Instead be steadfast in walking in humility and preaching the gospel.

## **12:14-21**

Paul confirmed his travel plans to visit them. He reaffirmed that he did not want anything from them, but instead wanted them to have the full knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted to win them all to the Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted them to surrender completely to the gospel: Christ died for our sins on a cross, he was buried, and he rose again the third day.

The apostle saw himself as a parent to this church. He was like a parent who saved up so that his children could have a better future. Paul was not interested in what this church could give him but he was interested in what he could give them. Paul did not want to be cut off from giving to this church all that the Lord gave him.

He was glad to give his life for them, even though he could see that the more he gave the less they gave back. They were like spoiled children that the parents gave everything to but who did not learn how to reciprocate. The worst kind of children are those who benefit from their parents materially but grow up and abandon the parents who gave them everything. These are the worst kind of people.

Paul said he spoke before the Lord when he told them that everything he did was for their benefit. Paul was not interested in himself but did everything so they could benefit. After all Paul did there were still people who did not repent but continued to live in sin.



## God Is Three In One - 2 Corinthians 13

### 13:1-4

*We are weak in him but we shall live with him by the power of God.*

To understand this we need to read all Paul's letters and all the gospels, and the books of Acts, and Revelation, and then all the Old Testament. We must put this in context.

One way to put things into context is to search the Bible for other places where Paul mentioned that a believer was "in him". Where did Paul teach a Christian was someone "in Christ". A good starting point is 1 Corinthians 1:30.

God the Father placed us into Christ Jesus. When did he do this? When we believed the gospel of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus we were placed into Christ. We were united with the Lord in his crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection.

This was why Paul said *"we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you."*

A life outside Christ is lived for self. Someone who does not believe the gospel lives for self. They worship self and devote their energy to self-provision, protection, and self-love.

However, to be weak in Christ means we are unable to function as the world system anymore. We can't live like the world. We are ruined for this world. We were crucified with the Lord Jesus by the Roman soldiers. The world system and the religious system killed Jesus. When Christ died we died with him. We die daily for the same reason Christ died. We no longer fit in with the spirit of the world system anymore.

We live now by resurrection power. We are able to infect other people with spiritual life. When we live around people they can sense this. They can feel the Spirit of God living in us and through us. For some people this causes them to hate us. For others they are drawn by the Holy Spirit to believe the gospel.

Paul was making his third trip to the church in Corinth. He quoted here something out of the law of Moses. It was a quote in regard to the court system. When two or three people had a testimony which agreed then it was established as truth in a court of law.

In a similar way, Paul said this third visit would be confirmation of the gospel he preached. He was, in a way, giving them an ultimatum to believe the gospel. Get in or get out. Make your decision. What are you going to believe? How will you decide? Like Joshua said, *"As for me and my house we will trust in the Lord."*

### 13:5-9

Part of the Christian life is reviewing and examining our life. Does our life line up with the scriptures? When we find areas of our life that does not line up with scripture we need to confess this to God. We need to acknowledge that we are wrong and that God is right. We need to take the side of truth even

against ourselves. We need to agree with God that he is right and we are wrong. The moment we resist and defend ourselves against truth we are backsliding. We are backsliding into darkness and unbelief when we defend self.

This is difficult at times. However, we have the promise from the Lord Jesus that if we abide in his word then we are his disciples indeed and we will know the truth and the truth will set us free. The Lord Jesus himself is the way, the truth, and the life. As we walk with the Lord he will point out things in our life which need correction as we are able to bear it. He corrects us in his mercy. He puts his finger on things in our life that will cheat us out of our full reward. We should thank God that he condescends to bring circumstances and people and his word into our path to stop us and turn us around. He puts up road blocks to stop us in our tracks. He makes us think about what we are doing.

There has never been a time in my life when I sinned that God didn't put up a warning sign or a roadblock. If we continue to walk in sin it is because we are stubborn. All sin flows from a heart of unbelief and pride.

Examine ourselves! Does this mean we sit around feeling sorry for ourselves? No, it does not mean this. Examining ourselves should be a time of frank confession to God that we have gone astray. When we confess to God and bring it into the light then the Lord can help us overcome. If we are not willing to talk it over with the Lord then how can we expect to find victory?

For some they may have walked in an area of defeat so long they no longer believe God can deliver them from it. But the Lord has all power in heaven and on earth to help us. This is the same God who created the universe. He parted the Red Sea for Israel. He was with the Hebrew men in the fiery furnace. He was with Daniel in the lion's den. He delivered Jonah out of the belly of the great fish. He is the same God who raised our Lord Jesus Christ from the dead.

Nothing is too difficult for God. He can set us free from every sin. He can deliver us from every area where we suffer defeat. The Lord is able to save us to the uttermost.

Do not give up believing God's word and his promises. Press on to find victory in every area. Do not be satisfied with the bare minimum of God's promises, but press on to take hold on all the Lord has for you.

My cry today to God is that he would give me a pure heart and clean hands. My prayer is that I may walk before the Lord in righteousness and in holiness. My prayer is that I can be filled with a greater measure of his Holy Spirit. My prayer is that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.

## **13:10-14**

In Paul's final greetings he included a glimpse of God three in one. God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Paul touches on the trinity of God. He mentioned the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost. Through scripture from Genesis to Revelation we see God revealed himself as God three in one. There are three persons in the unity of one God. He is one God in three persons.

In 2014 when the Lord came near to me I automatically knew he was God three in one. Anyone who truly experiences the presence of God or hears his voice will know this about the Lord. They will know this when they hear his voice.

Anyone who denies the trinity nature of God is denying that Jesus Christ is God. If God is not three in one then how could Jesus be God? An attack upon the three in one nature of God is an attack on the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. If Jesus Christ is not God then his death on the cross could not save us. It is only as Jesus is both God and Man that he can provide a satisfactory sacrifice for God. God can only be satisfied by his Son dying on the cross for our sins. No one else could do this. Only Jesus Christ is worthy to take on himself the sin of the whole world. He is worthy. No one else is worthy.

I am thankful for this book of Second Corinthians. Out of all the problems Paul confronted in this church we learn much about God, his plans, and how the church should worship and serve God.

Mike Kines  
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